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PRODUCING HIGH-QUALITY MARKET EGGS

The quality of eggs is affected by the management of the poultry flock as well as by the way the eggs are handled before they are marketed. While much of the depreciation in eggs is due to lack of care in marketing, better methods of production offer an opportunity for considerable improvement in the quality of eggs. Keen interest in better quality is now being manifested by producers who are trying to realize the greatest cash returns from their eggs.

The following rules are suggested for producing good-quality eggs:

- (1) Use breeding stock which produces eggs that weigh 24 ounces or more to the dozen.
- (2) Feed a complete diet containing grains, protein concentrates, minerals, and vitamins. Provide sufficient calcium, such as ground limestone and oyster shell, to produce eggs with firm shells.
- (3) Produce clean eggs by using plenty of litter on the floor and placing a thick layer of straw or shavings in the nests. Use wire netting on the under side of the roosts.
- (4) Produce eggs in quarters that are kept clean and sanitary.
- (5) Produce infertile eggs for market. Remove all male birds from the flocks after the hatching season is over.
- (6) Remove broody hens promptly from the nests and confine them in broody coops.
- (7) Gather the eggs two to four times daily in warm weather. Keep the eggs in a cool, clean, moist room or basement which is free from odors.
- (8) Pack the eggs with the large end up, and market them at least twice a week.
- (9) Market only clean eggs and protect the eggs from the weather while taking them to market. Soiled eggs may be cleaned by washing in a 1/2 to 1 percent solution of concentrated lye (sodium hydroxide).

The color of the yolk may affect the sales value of the eggs. Light-golden yolks of uniform color are in greatest demand. Limiting the amount of green feed to 5 pounds per 100 hens daily tends to produce eggs with light yellow yolks, while large quantities of green feed and yellow corn in the ration tend to produce deep yellow yolks. Confining the farm flock until afternoon helps to produce eggs with lighter and more uniform yolk color.

Cooling the eggs promptly after they are produced greatly improves their keeping quality. Eggs should be cool before they are packed in the cases or cartons. Wire baskets in which eggs cool quickly are sometimes used for gathering

the eggs. Eggs should be kept in a cool clean room preferably where the temperature remains below 65° F. and the relative humidity is above 70. The room should be damp but enough ventilation provided to prevent the forming of mold. Egg rooms or cellars in which a low temperature and a high humidity can be maintained are being used on many poultry farms. Mechanical equipment for cooling eggs is being used on some farms.